VIEW POINT

HUMANIZING THE NEW WAY OF WORKING

Trends and Challenges in Work, Workforce, and Workplace Transformation

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There is no disputing the fact that the overall work environment has undergone tectonic changes in the past decade, with major upheavals occurring just in the last few years triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the current situation is much more complex and the stakes higher, compelling organizations to look hard at what must be done on the work environment front. However, before embarking on a workplace transformation program, they must first grasp the extent of changes sweeping companies worldwide.

At Infosys, we view the work environment from three distinct yet interrelated angles - work, workforce and workplace. What are the key trends that we are witnessing in these areas?

WORK

The last four years saw a rapid rise in remote and hybrid working models. Eventually, work has settled into modular and digitized patterns with demands for anytime, anywhere and any device capabilities. As a result, it mandates smart and intuitive processes to cater to the new normal. It allows employees to capitalize on intelligent apps and seamless, intuitive collaboration solutions to deliver their best.

WORKFORCE

While work from home has always existed, organizations now must contend with the high adoption of hybrid and remote work. A positive consequence is a significant growth in workforce diversity. As a gig workforce becomes more acceptable and popular, the workforce becomes more agile and diverse. In addition, the attention now shifts to enhancing digital skills to support the gig economy and fostering citizen developers. As a result, the goalpost for any workplace transformation program now includes workforce well-being and experience.

WORKPLACE

When earlier questions revolved around the number of hours spent at work or the percentage of work completed, it has now changed to value creation. In short, the workplace has evolved from productivity factories to centers for meaningful collaboration. Plus, there is a growing awareness of connected and smart workspaces and sustainability thanks to rising interest in ESG.

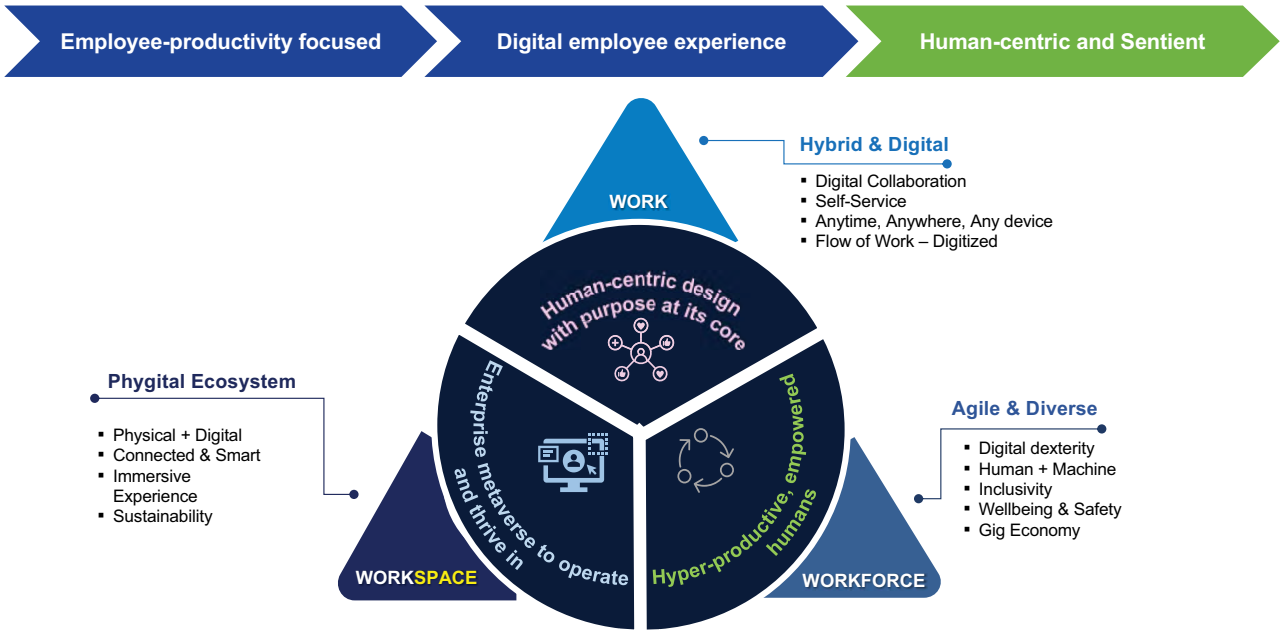

Figure 1 A new way of working: what it entails

[1] The future of work 2023 (infosys.com)

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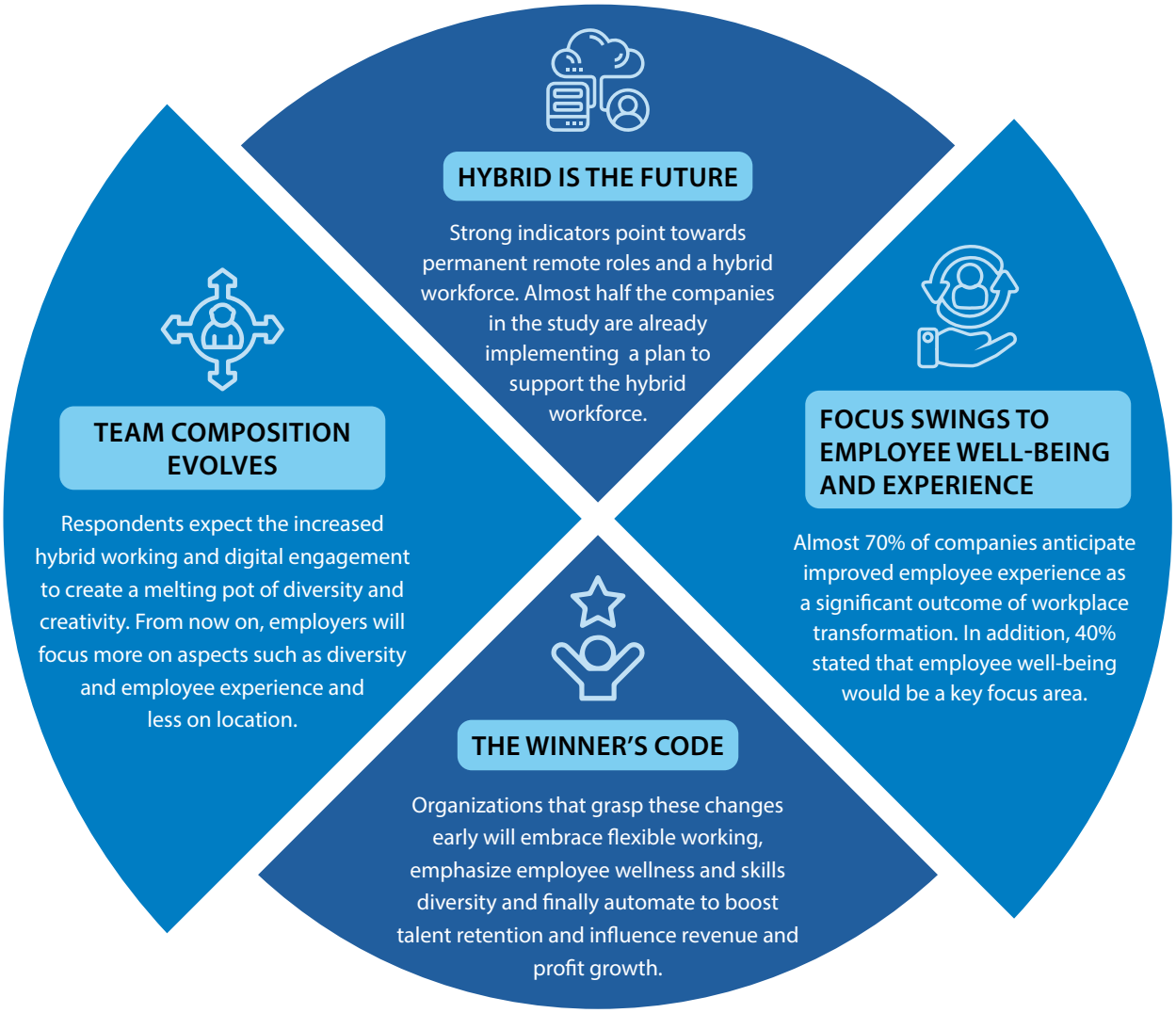
Changes must be incorporated across all three dimensions for an organization to take the right step forward. It also becomes imperative for enterprises to spotlight the human experience as the focal point around which the rest of the elements automatically align. The focus has shifted from employee productivity to employee experience and will gradually gravitate towards a larger, human-centric and sentient experience.

Infosys recently published a study, "The Future of Work 2023,"[1] representing the views of over 2500 business leaders in the UK, US, France, Germany, Australia and New Zealand. The key findings from the study validate this line of thinking -



Enterprises are in for an interesting period as they comprehend and adopt emerging trends. Infosys conducted a roundtable event on this topic in its quest to quickly assimilate the trends and present appropriate solutions for businesses worldwide. Senior leaders from Deutsche Bank, Morgan Stanley, Old Mutual, Regeneron, Footlocker, Nike, Hilton (Aimbridge Hospitality), Harry's, Inc and Chubb discussed the various trends and how digital technology can help. This paper captures the essence of the discussions.

Undoubtedly, digital technology will be a huge enabler for workplace transformation. However, for organizations to succeed in their endeavors, they must gain a much deeper understanding of the existing issues, emerging trends, and available technologies and then chalk out a plan suited for their context. The following section discusses hybrid work models in-depth to illustrate.

Spotlight on hybrid work models

As the threats from the COVID-19 pandemic subside, employers are keen to return to the more familiar model of having employees present in the office. However, there is a wide chasm between the organizations' desire to reset the counter and the employee's willingness to accept the change. The outcome - employees are deferring their return to office.

The Infosys study found that it is indeed a complex situation. Even managers and senior executives prefer a "flexible work model" where they can choose the location, tools to work with and working hours. In fact, 59% are already working remotely or flexibly. However, that's not all – employees don't want to be burdened with fixed days in the office and prefer to attend at their convenience.

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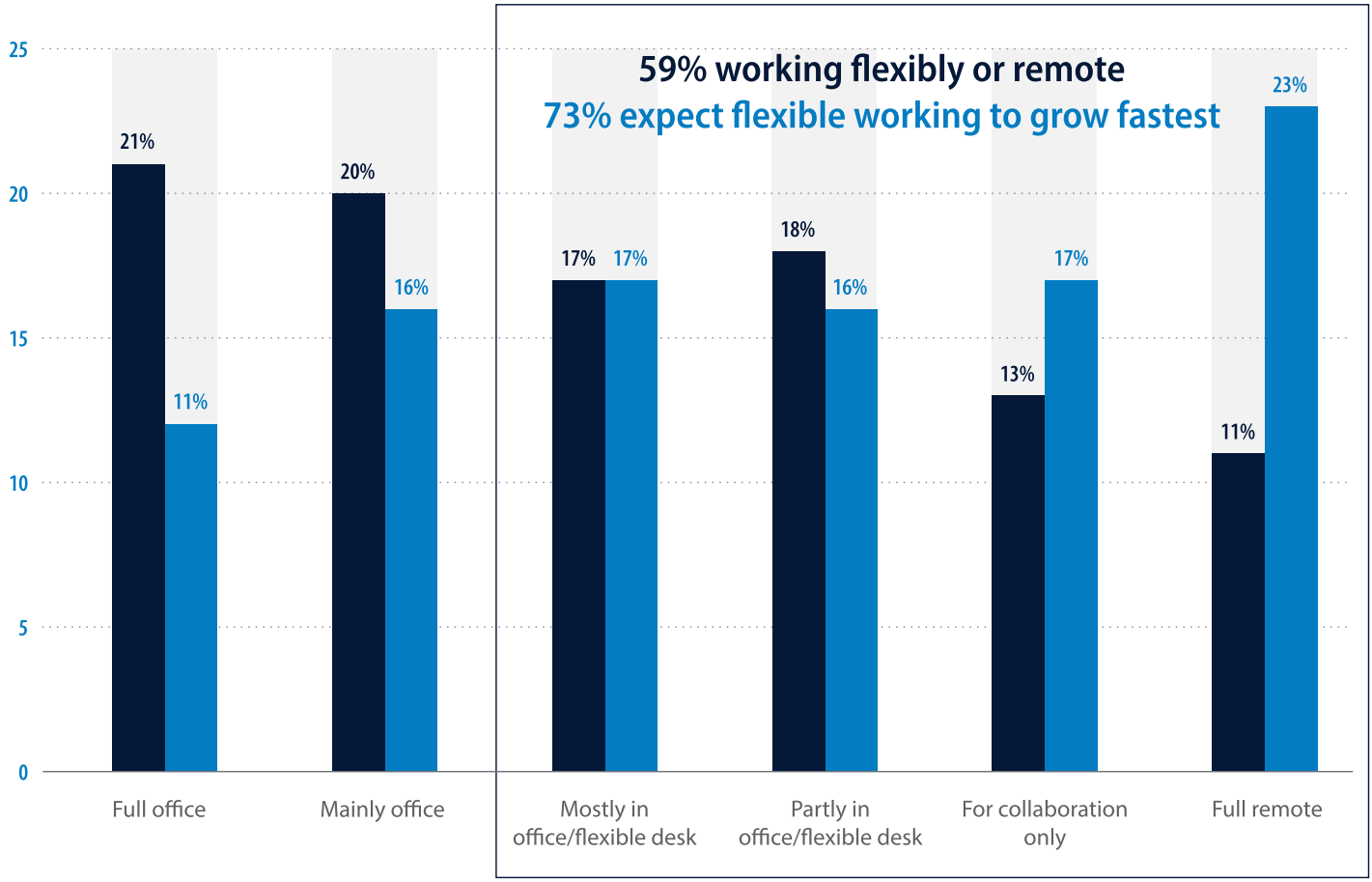

Figure 2 Preference for hybrid or flexible work models Source: Infosys study

[2] How Organizations Are Supporting a Hybrid Workforce (gartner.com)

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What's driving employees increasingly towards hybrid work?

According to a Gallup study, people opt for hybrid work to gain flexibility in their personal and professional lives. Plus, the majority expect burnout to decrease and productivity to increase.

Advantages of Hybrid Work, Ranked by Most Common Response

Since you began your hybrid work arrangement, which of the following positive impacts on your work have you noticed? Select all that apply. (% Mentioning)

Figure 3 Drivers for hybrid work Source: Gallup

Once employees experience the hybrid or flexible model, they are convinced that it's the way to go and are willing to prioritize its flexibility and convenience over other factors. The Infosys study also reveals that respondents expect flexible working to rise fast.

The ball is already set in motion. Many organizations worldwide have had to revise their policies and allow this flexibility. Over 90% of organizations now allow employees flexibility regarding how, when and where they work[2] . Why?

Because they understand that the consequences of not adapting to this change can severely impact hiring, employee engagement and talent retention. As it is, almost 60% of HR leaders say attracting talent is harder now than before the pandemic[3] . And the problem will worsen if hybrid or flexible models or, in other words, an "always on" culture are not allowed.

[3] Hybrid working: growing gap between leaders and employees | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)

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But the challenges are plenty in a hybrid work model[4] .

According to Gallup, there can be a sharp dent in employee experience if they face speed, connectivity, accessibility and collaboration related issues. Consequently, productivity dips, forcing organizations to deploy surveillance tools to ensure work gets done. It's a downward trajectory from there as these actions could erode employee trust arising from concerns over invasion of privacy or freedom.

Challenges of Hybrid Work, Ranked by Most Common Response

Since you began your hybrid work arrangement, which of the following negative impacts on your work have you noticed? Select all that apply. (% Mentioning)

Figure 4 Challenges of hybrid work Source: Gallup

The writing is clear on the wall - organizations must relook at the employee journey and implement innovative ideas to improve the employee experience. After all, it makes business sense to go on this path.

[4] The Advantages and Challenges of Hybrid Work (gallup.com)

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According to WONGDOODY, an Infosys company, better employee experience results in -

20%	21%	40%	41%
increase in productivity	increase in profitability	increase in output quality	drop in absenteeism

With this full understanding of hybrid or flexible work models, the next section shows how technology can be a major enabler and, in the process, augment employee experience.

Technology can provide a much needed lifeline to boost employee experience

Given that an employee's location will remain fluid in the foreseeable future, organizations must make all efforts to adapt to this change. What's especially critical now is the humanizing of design and interactions to engage employees better and enhance their experience. For that to happen, organizations must ready themselves to kick off a slew of digital initiatives.

Human-centricity demands New Digital Imperatives

Figure 5 Digitization is the way forward Source: Infosys

In a survey[5] on Digital Employee Experience (DEX) in the enterprise, 80% of respondents agreed that DEX was now a key consideration in their enterprise's digital transformation strategy. Moreover, with large scale automation, research estimates that at least 30% of an employee's workday could be diverted toward more strategic and value-adding work.[6]

[5] Organisations struggle to support IT in a hybrid work model | Computer Weekly

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The digital shift has begun

A digitally powered transformation will include insights-driven analytics, self-service and intelligent yet secure ways of working in a fluid and boundaryless work world and reach new levels of operational resilience. However, as enterprises fast-track workplace transformation, they must also remember that the workforce must be equipped to handle the changes.

Today's organizations emphasize enhancing their workforce's digital dexterity to support a gig economy and enable citizen developers. They are exploring a central hub for contextualized information for employees that's persona based and allows visibility into the applications necessary for the individual workers.

Furthermore, organizations are also considering well-being and experience in the ambit of the transformation initiative, having realized its salience. So, flexibility, device and location agnostic work is much used. Finally, the buzz around connected, smart workspaces and sustainability continues as enterprises progress on their ESG roadmap.

All in all, a digital work transformation is the only viable option for enterprises looking to navigate the current volatile situation successfully.

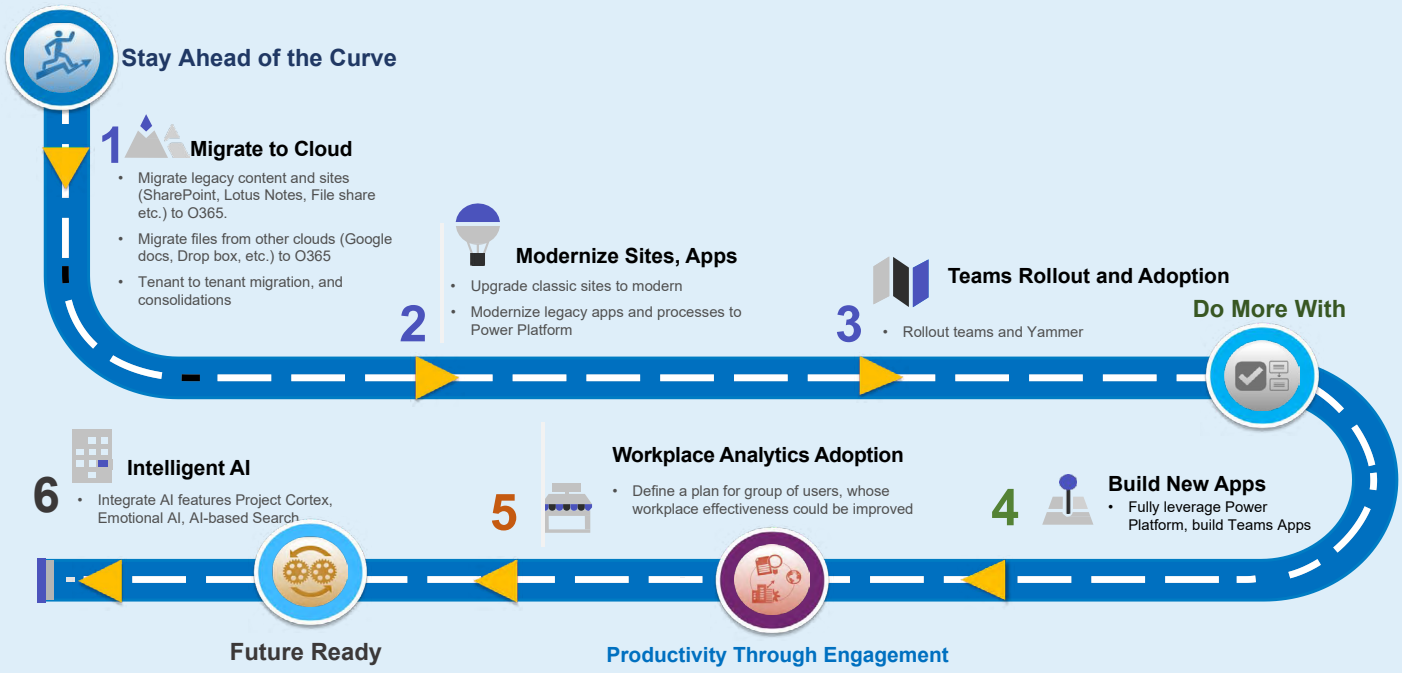
What's on order for the new and demanding work environment?

A digital transformation can bring about sweeping changes by addressing many issues. With the initial rush to set up for remote work now behind them, progressive organizations are next focused on realigning their business processes to achieve the three core objectives of any digital transformation program, irrespective of their maturity in this journey, which are:

1. Decoupling/interoperability over disparate systems
2. Infusion of insights and automation for hybrid efficiencies
3. Flexible and resilient operating models

A typical program for an enterprise will involve a cloud-first digital transformation and solutions for smooth collaboration, connected and sustainable workplaces, and an agile workforce secured by zero trust security with truly immersive work experiences.

A sound roadmap for modernization starts with moving to the cloud before proceeding to modernizing legacy apps and processes, adopting collaboration tools and developing new apps. Once these fundamentals are addressed, it considers more sophisticated initiatives such as workplace analytics or AI-powered tools.



However, a successful digital transformation entails careful planning, technology expertise, business and stakeholder understanding and a capable team. With many years of experience adding value to its clients, Infosys is the right partner for such complex undertakings.

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Infosys, with a strong ecosystem, can help at every step

It's a highly interconnected and interdependent business environment today. Technology initiatives, therefore, require contributions from a variety of players. Infosys fully recognizes this, evidenced by its robust ecosystem constituting partners, investments, alliances and other relationships.

Here's how Infosys capitalizes on its Microsoft partnership and the capabilities of its subsidiary, WOONGDOODY, to bring about a digital-led human experience transformation.

The Infosys Microsoft BizApps and Modern Work Practice digitize hybrid workplaces, redesign the physical workspace and prioritize organizational well-being. In addition, it works towards providing contextualized information to end users anytime, anyplace, any device and ensures the right apps are available to them.

In addition, our Microsoft Business Applications Services Practice has developed a Platform of Possibilities 3.0 which helps progress towards becoming a resilient and live enterprise by adopting a human-first, industry-first, data-driven and cloud-first approach. The key themes that this platform focuses on are technology led modernization, data and AI, business value by imbibing industry best practices and optimizing business functions, digital experience, and talent and organization. Almost 20 solutions created through this platform are available on Microsoft AppSource and turbocharge the digital journey by keeping the human at the core.

At Infosys, we focus on the synergies between customer experience, employee experience and operational experience to help enterprises achieve a "total human experience." This means focusing on customer satisfaction, ensuring a productive and healthy working environment and enhancing the quality of products and services. To enable this, we harness the Microsoft technology ecosystem with AI capabilities embedded in it to deliver superior experiences to clients.

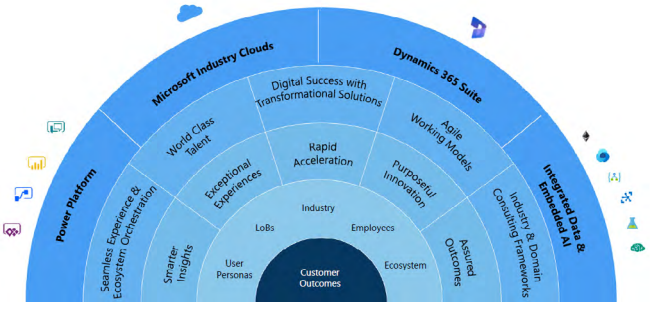
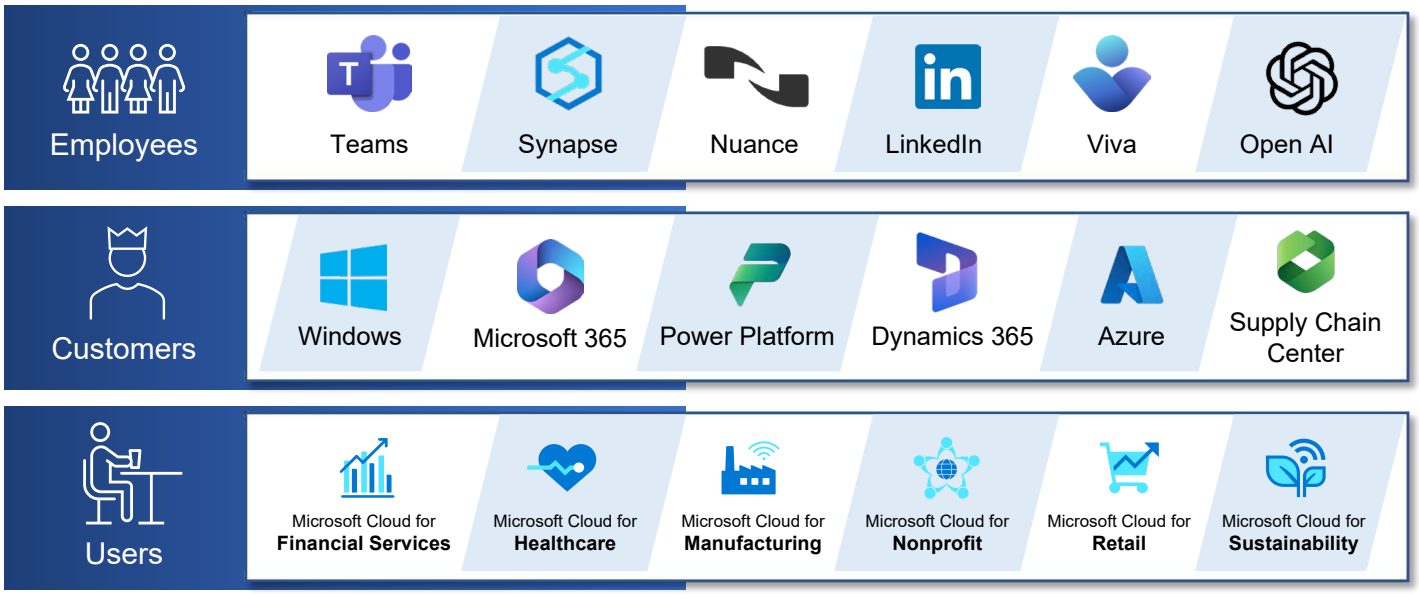


Figure 6 Platform of Possibilities 3.0



The practice relies on a bevy of Microsoft tools. For example, it harnesses Microsoft Viva, an employee experience platform within Microsoft Teams and Office 365, to communicate contextually. The four pillars that power Viva are connections, insights, topics and learning, all highly relevant today. The platform enables collaboration, knowledge, and career growth, empowering employees to graduate to the next level.

[6] The Future Of Work: More Hybrid, More Collaborative, More Automated (forbes.com)

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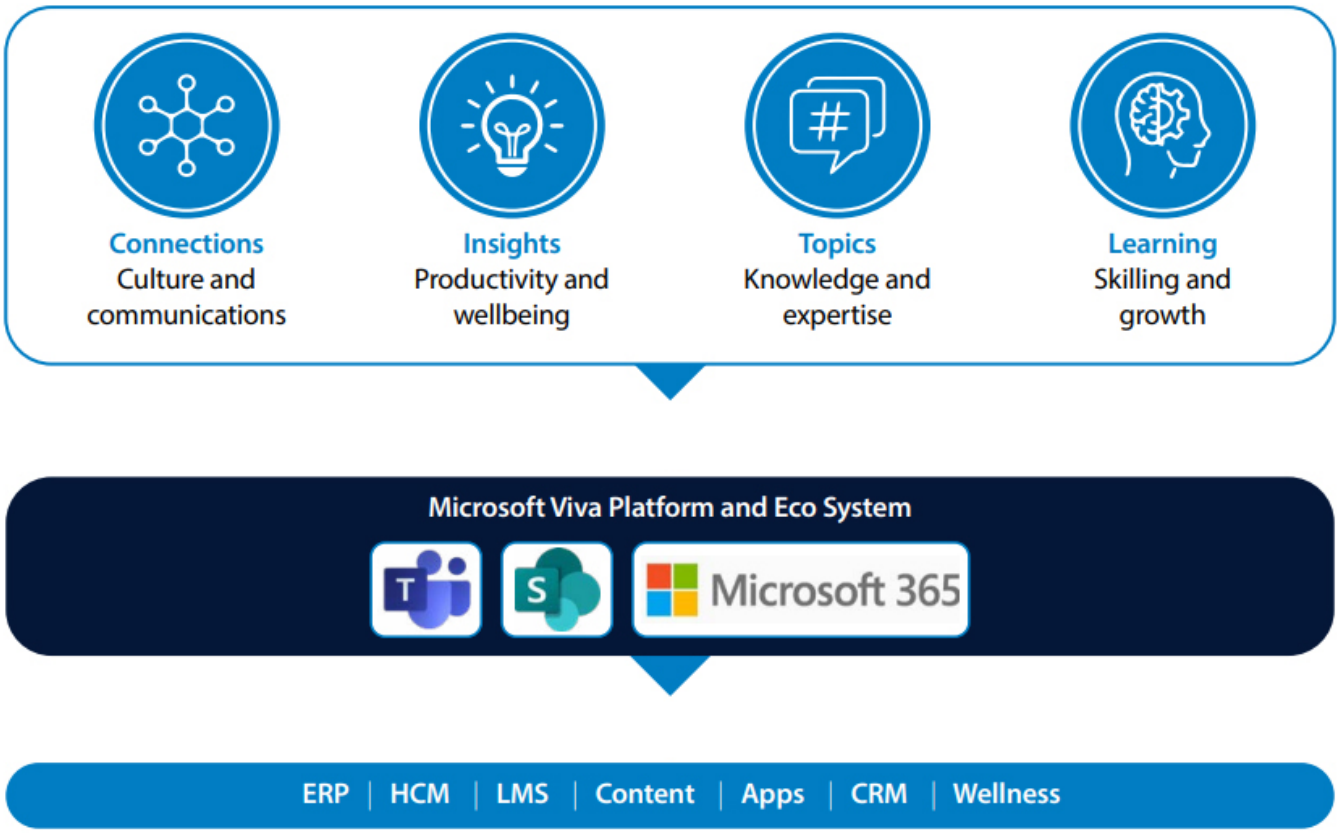

Infosys' offerings for the Viva platform include consulting, implementation and adoption, integration and app development and managed services.

WONGDOODY, an Infosys company, focuses on the design phase of humanizing interactions by considering data, platforms, brands and experience. The methodology is design-led human experience transformation and revolves around six key principles – human-centricity, unification, inclusivity, personalization, transparency and measurability.

Key Highlights

1. **Human-centricity** - *adopting a human-led approach*
2. **Unification** - *having a central platform to drive engagement*
3. **Inclusivity** - *removing traditional accessibility barriers*
4. **Personalization** - *driving engagement with contextualized experiences*
5. **Transparency** - *bringing employess along on the journey*
6. **Measurability** - *uniting employees through shared successes*

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Conclusion

Digitizing the workplace and workforce, is a given today. Organizations have little choice but to relook at the employee journey and find new ideas to enhance it. They must move to the next stage of humanizing employee experience to elevate employee experience, performance and satisfaction. A continuous learning mindset and innovation orientation are the foundation for these digital and AI technologies. With its robust and holistic approach to the digital work environment bolstered by a strong partner ecosystem, Infosys can show the way for organizations keen to forge a path.

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